

SEVEN BY FIVE. H. E. Bates. *Michael Joseph*, 25s. 1963. 22.5 cm. 462 pages. This selection consists of thirty-five tales written during the same number of years, the period 1926-61, but although Mr. Bates is a master of stories of many different lengths, these are all comparatively short. They also omit the well-known collection of war stories written under the pseudonym of Flying-Officer X. Mr. Bates is a highly skilled craftsman, who throughout his career has developed the power to strip down the story to the essentials of narrative and suggestive description. His subjects cover a wide range of scene both in England and abroad and of many different types and classes of men and women. He is a versatile and perceptive writer, whose gifts nevertheless are mostly in evidence near the surface of his themes, and do not often probe them deeply. He leaves the impression of a writer who is better equipped to describe the immediate impact of an experience rather than its deeper and lasting significance.